

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting - Thursday, January 16 at 8:30 a.m.**  
**Microtel, Farmington, NY 14425**

<b>Board Member Attendance:</b>	Present	Excused	Absent
David Hutchings, Sonnenberg Gardens - Chair of the Board	X		
Steve Fuller, Bristol Mountain – Board Treasurer	Z		
Charles Parkhurst, Lyons National Bank - Board Secretary	X		
Lisa FitzGerald, Finger Lakes Winery Tours, Chalet Bed and Breakfast, Vice Chair of the Board	X		
Mike Kauffman, Eastview	X		
Mike Roeder, Caledonia Country Club	Z		
Sheryl Mordini, 1795 Acorn Inn Bed and Breakfast	X		
Lenore Friend, Finger Lakes Community College	X		
Russ Kenyon, Boylan Code	X		
Mark Gilbride, Lazy Acre Alpacas		X	
Chris Vastola, Ontario County Board of Supervisors, Town of Canadice		X	
Lori Proper, The Lake House at Canandaigua		X	
Sherry Brahm-French, Arbor Hill Grapery & Winery	Z		
Mike Darling, Crafty Ales and Lagers	X		
Todd Plouffe, Indus Hospitality Group	X		
Jim Cecere, The Speakeasy at VINIFERA, FLX Group,	Z		
Naved Amed, Geneva on The Lake	Z		

Staff: Valerie Knoblauch, Tracey Burkey, Jessica VanDeMar, Theresa VanWormer, Carolina Taylor,  
 Chloe Davis. Guests: Via Zoom - Beatriz Murray – Bowers; Josiah Brown – Famous Destinations  
 of New York; Diane Linnet – RIT Magic Studios

**Call to Order and Welcome.** David Hutchings called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. During the introductions, he asked new team members, Chloe Davis and Carolina Taylor to say a few words about themselves. Carolina shared that she was from Columbia and had recently moved to the area from New York City with her husband Ryan. Chloe commented on her recent graduation from Niagara University (also noted as the alma mater of Tracey and Jessica.) Chloe is from Naples, NY. Carolina brings special skills in Spanish and also work history from a firm in New York City. Chloe will be taking on the role of Partner Engagement Coordinator and Carolina will be our Visitor Experience Specialist. Diane was welcomed as an extension of the team in her role as the director of the Virtual Museum project.

Tracey noted that we were having notes taken through AI and wanted to let everyone know that we are trying it out. She thanked Todd Plouffe for helping to host this meeting at the hotel, an Indus property.

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**Consent Agenda.** David asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 12, 2024 meeting. *The motion was made by Russ Kenyon and seconded by Lisa Fitzgerald. All present voted in favor of the motion.* The financial reports were presented as part of the consent agenda and had been provided by Beatriz at Bowers; Bea was present to address questions. These were presented as drafts for January and no motion was requested. The final versions will be available at the next meeting.

Financial Reports. Bea overviewed the Financial reports that had been received. She noted the impact of the grants on the financials and the attention that will be needed for cash flow related to these grants. She is providing Valerie a cash flow report. There were no further questions on the board financials and they will be updated for approval at the next meeting.

**President's Report.** Valerie provided an overview of the meeting and overviewed some recently completed and in-progress items.

Valerie shared with the Board information on the recent passing of both Mary Ann Bell, former Board Chair (Director at Sonnenberg Gardens) and also Jim Kozlowski, the husband of former board member, Lois Kozlowski (Wizard of Clay Pottery in Bristol/Honeoye.) Valerie has extended the sympathies on behalf of our board to the families, and to Lois in particular. She has also reached out to the Wizard of Clay - Pegge and Jamie to offer our support at this time.

**Server Migration.**

The server migration project is nearly complete and within the budget (capital project) of up to \$30,000. The migration process went smoothly and is requiring some adjustment in internal work practices. The overarching goals of efficiency, capacity, security are 90% there. The next step is to decommission the current (2017 server) and to ensure proper backups and record keeping. Essentially, this has been a three-year process that started with converting to digital record keeping and then migrate data to the cloud. The board's online information center had been in a one-drive folder. That will be replaced with a new portal, once the team is stabilized. Valerie thanked the committee - led by Steve Fuller for all the help in this large project. She also noted the continued assistance of David Lee (former employee) with his knowledge of our history and skills in computers; and the team's commitment to making this work.

**Additional General Activities - Workforce Development.**

Valerie noted that while the team has been "quiet" with regard to workforce development, there has been forward motion, including working with Economic Development on matching a grant that will augment training costs in cooperation with FLCC and their program lead by Sarah Pendry. The pilot is with Lincoln Hill Farms, but any tourism and hospitality business can pursue this course of training. On a related, but different note, Valerie and Jessica recently met with Jackie Termini regarding a developing FLCC program for high school students to participate in real projects and work endeavors of businesses through the college. Her proposal that would seat high school students directly in our office as part of their work project. There will be more to come as this project reaches a unique potential segment for future workforce.

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**Board Requirements - Self Evaluation, Fiduciary, Conflict of Interest**

Valerie reminded everyone that the Board Self-Evaluation, Conflict of Interest, Fiduciary responsibility forms will all need to be complete by the next Board meeting. These have to be passed forward to Ontario County and/or posted to our PARIS site.

**Presentations. Search Committee**

Lisa and Charles shared the floor and commented that the search was going along well. They had decided to contract with Searchwide, after reviewing the procurement forms and having interviews. They favored Searchwide for their pricing, the guarantee of placement in case something did not work out. They will guide the board through the process and cover all items including legal requirements such as background checks, etc. The board should expect individual calls from Searchwide as the process evolves.

Lisa will be attending the Board Leadership session in Florida next week. She will be able to meet many CEO's and the leadership of Searchwide.

**Visitor Economy Summit and Roundtable - March 18, 2025**

Josiah was available on zoom to remind everyone of the next steps for the Summit and Roundtable which has been scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the board will be given their tools to invite community members to the roundtable. This is a limited invitation. At that roundtable summit, attendees will be asked to workshop questions about the industry's challenges, the opportunities for partnerships for community benefit. This will help place tourism's role as the second lane of economic development. Josiah also underscored the need for the board to leverage their community influence and encouraged them to use this influence to strengthen the organization's work and impact.

The team discussed the strategy for inviting key stakeholders to an event focused on the future of the visitor economy. They agreed on the importance of personal invitations and the need for a clever invitation and memorable leave behind. The team also discussed the need for attendees to understand the impact of the visitor economy on their communities, including aspects like youth retention, quality of life, and vibrancy. Jim suggested that attendees should leave with a tool to share their newfound knowledge with their constituencies, such as a slide or information to present back to their councils. These tools will be provided.

Further discussion ensued about the importance of aligning groups and partnerships to drive results. Jim touched on this specifically. It was agreed that partnerships directly impact our potential success and the wins we can cause for residents. Josiah advised that the end goal is destination stewardship and community development that needs to occur before bringing in more tourists. We discussed the fact that economic development almost always starts with a "first date" of a visit. The wrap up of the discussion was that each board member is to provide at least three solid potential contacts/influencers who should attend our roundtable. Lenore encourage the group to consider also influencers and knowledgeable in certain areas such as housing or health care or major employers.

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Valerie will send out a survey and from that develop a list that is inclusive, but without overlap. Again, the total attendance is limited. The theme was reinforced as "Building Communities Together."

**Calendar. Change in Date for the February Board of Directors meeting to February 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Given the conversation about the importance of the summit and roundtable, there was a suggestion to move the board meeting to immediately precede the kick-off event. David Hutchings asked about this change. There was a motion by *Sherry Brahm-French with a second by Mike Darling make our February board meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. at Aquilano Wine Cellars. All present voted in favor of the motion.*

**Presentation - Virtual Museum**

Valerie presented a general update on the progress as Diane and Theresa prepared to show some of the experiences and how the intro to the program would work. Valerie reviewed the history of the grant and the ultimate goal of bringing to life up to 75 different signs. This required the installation of about 25 new signs across the county. Each town will have at least one. There are three types of signs (existing, bronze plaques, and interpretive). The mock-ups of these were shared. Beneath or included in each sign is the "more of the story" part which will bring the augmented reality in. This involves multiple vendors and coordination. There are many moving parts. Content development is crucial as well.

Valerie reminded everyone of the goal of having this substantially done by the April NYSTIA conference and the program finished by December of this year. She also shared the good news that the project has been selected for a demo at the International Cultural and Heritage Imaging and Innovation conference. This will be held in Croatia and is quite an honor. Valerie will be attending that.

Diane picked up the overview of the project. She shared the intro app with the board and showed how the museum would feature stories, augmented reality experiences, photos, and videos. The app's features include maps, profiles of people, and gamification elements, such as a scavenger hunt in Clifton Springs. The app and website will feature and be organized by tour themes - connected with associated badges and prizes. Diane provided a detailed list of the themes and the signs under those themes. Special attention to accessibility is being made, both as a requirement of the grant and also as a desire for superior customer services. Next steps include content clarification and development with the Ontario County Historical Society.

In the meeting, Diane facilitated a "user testing event" on the app. She provided QR codes for scanning and the board members - both virtual and in place were able to interact with 3d models. This was well received. Valerie and Jessica clarified our other contract with a company called STORY and the trail app that is a basis for marketing this. A question came up about the app's data collection capabilities. It was noted that FLVC does not currently collect personal information and is sensitive to violating this trust - and still engaging with those that want to. The team suggested a newsletter or further content discussion.

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Diane's presentation will be shared with the board.

Further discussion took place about the scope of the project - especially with regard to the geographic centrality to Ontario County. While this is the parameters of the grant - and the source of the money - it was shared that we should manage user expectations about how proudly we "exist" - especially in the light of naming it the Finger Lakes Virtual Museum.

**Old Business.**

The agenda made note of the upcoming RFP's for Website and for Marketing Agencies.

**New Business**

No new business was brought before the board.

**Adjournment.**

*Russ cast the motion; seconded by Charles. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.*

**Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, February 5 at 3:30 p.m. at Aquilano Wine Cellars on Main Street in Canandaigua.

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Attachments:

Links to Virtual Museum Presentation

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